



STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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TOM LUNA
STATE SUPERINTENDENT
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

ISAT Sample Questions: Grade 9 Reading

The Swimmer

On a day in 1926 when most people would have been avoiding the high waves of a cold and pounding sea, nineteen-year-old Gertrude Ederle was eagerly preparing to plunge into them. Dressed in a red, two-piece bathing suit that she had designed herself, she carefully donned a pair of goggles that she had also designed. (Today those goggles are in the Smithsonian Institution.) Coated in layers of oil to protect herself from the cold, she prepared to enter the water, while others boarded the two tugs that would accompany her on her swim across the English Channel.

“When somebody tells me I cannot do something, that’s when I do it,” said a 93-year-old Gertrude Ederle years later to a reporter interviewing her about her athletic achievements as a young woman. That is precisely the attitude that had propelled her in 1926 to become the first woman to swim the English Channel.

The common view at that time was that swimming the Channel was too great a challenge for a woman. Many people had attempted to meet that challenge, but only five had done so successfully – and all five had been men.

Ederle’s decision to be the one to show that a woman could also meet the challenge was a reasonable one. She had begun swimming as a child, and by the time she was 15, she had become an excellent swimmer and had won a three-mile race across New York Bay. In the four years before her first attempt to cross the Channel, she had set twenty-nine swimming records, including three in the Olympics. During the 1924 Olympics in Paris, she had earned a gold medal in the 4 x 100-meter relay and bronze medals in the 100-meter freestyle and 400-meter freestyle.

In spite of her experience and expertise, however, her first Channel attempt in 1925 had ended in failure. After swimming fourteen of the twenty-one miles, Ederle’s coughing had caused her nervous coach, who had, himself, attempted many times to swim the Channel, to reach out and grab her arm. This had disqualified her and created considerable merriment among the members of the press, who had not expected her to succeed.

But on this day in 1926, Ederle intended to dispel any doubt once and for all. Her coach, this time, was Thomas Burgess, one of the five men who had swum the Channel successfully. If others were troubled by the rough waters, Ederle was not. She loved the sea and felt at home in it. Indeed, to her it seemed like a person, and she talked to it while swimming. She once said, “I never feel alone when I’m out there.”

Today, her pleasure in her undertaking was great. She sang songs and concentrated on her stroke. Instead of her usual stroke, Ederle was using the less conventional front crawl. After a time, she was confronted by waves as high as twenty feet, but when her coach called to her to give up, she cheerfully called back, “What for?”



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By the time the day drew to a close, she had swum from Griz-Nez, France, to Kingsdown, England, in 14 ½ hours. The rough weather had caused ferries to cancel their crossings, and the currents increased her swimming distance from twenty-one miles to thirty-five miles. In spite of this, she not only succeeded in swimming the Channel in such difficult conditions, but she also broke the former record. Her crossing time was shorter by almost two hours. She had firmly established the fact that women could succeed in difficult circumstances.

Large crowds greeter her when she reached Kingsdown. Later, New York City welcomed her home with its first-ever ticker tape parade, which was attended by more than two million people. Her name and face became well-known, and she even starred in a movie called, *Swim, Girl, Swim*. Irving Berlin wrote a song for her called "Trudy." Inspired by Gertrude Ederle, more than 60,000 American women earned their Red Cross life-saving certificates during the next few years. In 1965, Ederle was inducted in to the International Swimming Hall of Fame and into the Women's Sports Hall of Fame in 1980.

Although today she has been forgotten by many, early in the twentieth century her remarkable accomplishment made her an icon for independence, perseverance, and feminine achievement. Gertrude Ederle herself, saw matters more simply and said, "I just knew it could be done, it had to be done, and I did it."

1. Based on its Latin roots, the word "propelled" means
 - A. driven again.
 - B. driven forward.
 - C. driven incorrectly.
 - D. driven many times.

2. What is the meaning of the word dispel as it is used in the passage?
 - A. try to ignore
 - B. put one's mind to
 - C. try to remember
 - D. rid one's mind of



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3. Based on the passage, what did Ederle most likely believe about the sea?
 - A. The sea was predictable.
 - B. The sea represented failure.
 - C. The sea was like an old friend.
 - D. The sea caused health problems.

4. What most likely was the reaction of the press when Gertrude Ederle succeeded in swimming across the Channel in 1926?
 - A. concerned
 - B. relaxed
 - C. astounded
 - D. betrayed

5. Which word best describes the tone of the passage?
 - A. sarcastic
 - B. admiring
 - C. objective
 - D. humorous

6. Which precaution did Gertrude Ederle take in her 1926 attempt to swim across the English Channel?
 - A. coating her body with oil
 - B. keeping all boats away from her
 - C. asking her coach to swim with her
 - D. wearing a special one-piece swimsuit

7. What helped Ederle deal with the rough Channel water?
 - A. postponing her entrance into the water
 - B. focusing on her joy of swimming
 - C. using several different strokes
 - D. swimming in the wake of the boat



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8. Which sentence from the passage **best** supports the idea that Gertrude Ederle was a talented swimmer?
- A. "In the four years before her first attempt to cross the Channel, she had set twenty-nine swimming records, including three in the Olympics."
 - B. "Large crowds greeter her when she reached Kingsdown."
 - C. Her name and face became well-known, and she even starred in a movie called *Swim, Girl, Swim*."
 - D. "Irving Berlin wrote a song for her called 'Trudy'."



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Question #	Correct Answer	Standard/Goal/Objective
1	B	1.8.1
2	D	1.8.2
3	C	2.1.1
4	C	2.1.1
5	B	2.1.1
6	A	2.1.1
7	B	2.1.1
8	A	2.2.3